

REMARKS

Claims 1-7, 9-31, 33-85, 88-99, and 104-521 are pending. Claims 8 and 32 were canceled by Applicant in a previous Amendment dated September 29, 2003. Claims 86-87 and 100-103 were withdrawn by the Examiner as being drawn to a non-elected invention in an Office Action dated January 2, 2004. Claims 86-87 and 100-103 have been canceled, without prejudice, by Applicant herein. No pending claim is currently amended.

Applicants appreciate that the Examiner has indicated that claims 1-7, 9-31, 33-85, 88-99, and 104-521 are allowed.

I. Rejoinder of Withdrawn Claims

The Examiner has granted Applicant's request for rejoinder "for all claims with the exception of claims 86, 87, and 100-103, which the Office still believes are drawn to separately patentable inventions requiring non-overlapping and burdensome searches." (Office Action dated January 2, 2004; page 2; underlining omitted.) Although Applicant respectfully disagrees that claims 86-87 and 100-103 should be restricted, Applicant cancels, without prejudice, claims 86-87 and 100-103 in order to expedite prosecution of the present application.

II. Information Disclosure Statement

Applicant notes that a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement, with attached form PTO-1449 and copies of cited references, was hand-delivered and filed December 17, 2003. Applicant further notes that the Office Action dated January 2, 2004, does not make record of this Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement or the references cited therein. Making the same of record in the prosecution of the above-referenced application is respectfully requested.


CONCLUSION

In light of the above arguments and amendments, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request notification of same. The Examiner is invited and encouraged to directly contact the undersigned if such contact may enhance the efficient prosecution of the application to issuance.

No fee is believed due. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees that may be required to Deposit Account No. 14-0629.

Respectfully submitted,

NEEDLE & ROSENBERG, P.C.

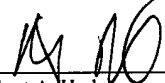


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I hereby certify that this correspondence, including any items indicated as attached or included, is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on the date indicated below.



Robert A. Hodges

2/24/2004
Date